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FALLING INTO HEAVEN: PRE-ADAMISM AND PARADOX IN *RAYUELA*

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A great deal has been written concerning the themes of Edenic nostalgia and irrationalism in the late Julio Cortázar's greatest work, *Rayuela*. Much of this commentary, though, has perhaps been more intent on seeing with Cortázar's (supposed) vision than with visioning Cortázar. Cortázar's vision is certainly an engaging one, but here I propose an exercise in re-vision, or in re-visioning. I shall take a sidelong look at him which I think may share part of his own sidelong look at himself, and in so doing I hope to reveal new depths in his art at the same time that I expose certain difficulties in his thought. Briefly, I intend to show that *Rayuela*'s protagonist, Horacio Oliveira, is beset by systematic confusions as to the nature of both the "reason" he rejects and the non-rational he embraces. I hold that these confusions contribute to thwarting his quest for wholeness — a quest which either ends or does not in the courtyard of a madhouse. And I affirm that, nevertheless, in the ironic and dialogic structure of *Rayuela*, Cortázar opens up an inner dialogue with Horacio and with himself, a dialogue which offers both a critique of Horacio's confusion (and of his creator's) and a validation of Oliveira's quest — and of ours.

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Horacio conducts his life on the basis of a rejection of what he calls reason, or the Western concept of reason and logic, and he exalts non-rational and non-Western modes of thinking, feeling, and behaving. This theme is so well known in *Rayuela* and in all of Cortázar's work that I need not press the point with citations. But what needs to be pointed out are two features of this anti-rationalism which have been not so much unnoticed as taken for granted.

In the first place, the "reason" which Horacio rejects tends to be identified simply with conventional bourgeois rationality and self-interest — with reason

as it is narrowed and degraded under modern conditions. Aronne Amestoy points out that “[n]uestro autor acusa simplemente la apertura del espíritu occidental durante estas últimas décadas” (53) — or, perhaps we might say, during these past few centuries. To be precise: first, **reason** is largely identified with a bourgeois **rationality** which Horacio (and to some extent his creator) repeatedly inscribe in a rhetoric of bourgeois custom — of equestrian statues and model grandparents (71:433), of “una vida satisfactoria, perfumes agradables, buenos sueldos, literatura de alta calidad, sonido estereofónico,... el reino será de material plástico... Es decir un mundo satisfactorio para gentes razonables” (71:435-36), in the words of Horacio’s mentor Morelli, whose words elsewhere are often those of Cortázar himself in his own writings. That is, reason in general is identified with rationality, with the technical, instrumental reason which largely originated with Descartes; and this technical reason is then identified further with respectability, with the attitudes of “los ciegos de lógica y de buenas costumbres” (28:200).

But this is simply to mislocate the problem. Cortázar called himself “un argentino afrancesado,” and as Joseph Campbell said, “The wonderful thing about the French is that they have been so imprinted by Descartes that anything that cannot be parsed to Cartesian coordinates must be absurd” (221) — whether in condemnation, we may add, or in praise. Thus far on the philosophical level; and on the sociopolitical level, too, this identification of “reason” with rationality — this inverted Cartesianism — is not only oversimplified but false. As Gerald Graff says:

The theory of excessively “rational” character of modern establishments is... misleading when submitted to examination.... [T]he type of “rationality” in which this kind of society specializes is a purely functional or instrumental rationality, that is, a rationality devoted to expediting goals which have not themselves been rationally determined and are not subjected to rational criticism. It is this trivial, dehumanized rationality which cultural radicals take to be the essence of the rational consciousness they condemn. In this faulty analysis, reason, once assumed to be man’s chief remedy for alienation, comes to be seen as one of the chief causes of alienation. This misleading diagnosis of the disease of modern culture as a “hypertrophy of the intellect,” to quote Susan Sontag’s phrase, inevitably results in the proliferation of quixotically anti-rationalistic cures for cultural ills. (411)

This criticism of an inverted Cartesianism is perhaps even more applicable to many of Cortázar’s commentators than it is to Cortázar himself, Morelli himself, or Horacio himself.

Thus, in the first place, Horacio tends to perceive “reason” only in the sharply narrowed and deeply distorted meaning assigned to the word by the people who are, after all, traditionally referred to as **gente de razón**. A second problem with Horacio’s perceptions is still more important and still more pervasive. To wit, what Horacio opposes to “reason” — whether in the narrow

sense or in a broader and more valid sense — is not a single thing. Rather, it is two different and indeed opposite things which he confuses: to wit, the supra-rational and the sub-rational. He makes the same mistake about primitive “mana” which Ernst Cassirer criticized in Max Müller:

[Müller] equates the “infinite” with the “indefinite,” the “interminable” with the “indeterminate.” But the fluidity of the mana concept... has nothing whatever to do with the philosophical or religious idea of the Infinite. As the latter is **above** the possibility of exact verbal determination, so the former is still **below** such fixation. Language moves in the middle kingdom between the “indefinite” and the “infinite”; it transforms the indeterminate into a determinate idea, and then holds it within the sphere of finite determinations. So there are, in the realm of mythic and religious conception, “ineffables” of different order, one of which represents the lower limit of verbal expression, the other the upper limit. (801-81)

It is this middle kingdom of language and determinate ideas, this sphere of finite determinations, whose limitations Horacio struggles to escape. “Neuma y no logos,” he adjures (93:485). This quest to transcend discursive reason is a protest not only against a certain social and historical situation but against a personal trait, shared by his creator, of compulsive intellectualization: “Hasta de la sopa hago una operación dialéctica” (90:477). But in this quest, Horacio continually treats what is outside that verbal, logical sphere as a single thing, not two; he endlessly confuses the infinite and the indefinite, the supra-rational and the sub-rational, the realm of choice and that of chance. Specifically, he constantly exalts the “primitive indefinite” and invests it with the qualities of the “transcendental infinite.” This is not to deny that sub-rational, prelogical experience has its own validity and value in human life. But in the words of one of Cortázar’s (and my) favorite authors: “A knife... is neither true nor false. But someone who grasps it by the blade is truly in error” (Daumal 82-83). And Cortázar’s characters are continually picking up their experience by the wrong end.

One need only think in this regard of Morelli, with his invocation of “Complejo de la Arcadia, retorno al gran útero, back to Adam, le bon sauvage” (71:432). But the most striking use of the theme is Horacio’s, as he wakes up one morning and sees the light of yet another dawn coming in through the blinds:

Salía de tan adentro de la noche que tuve como un vómito de mí mismo, el espanto de asomar a un nuevo día con su misma presentación, su indiferencia mecánica de cada vez: conciencia, sensación de luz, abrir los ojos, persiana, el alba.

En ese segundo, con la omnisciencia del semisueño, medí el horror de lo que tanto maravilla y encanta a las religiones: la perfección eterna del cosmos, la revolución inacabable del globo sobre su eje. Náusea, sensación insoponible de coacción. **Estoy obligado a tolerar que el sol salga todos los días.**

Es monstruoso. **Es inhumano.**

Antes de volver a dormirme imaginé (vi) un universo plástico, cambiante, lleno de maravilloso azar, un cielo elástico, un sol que de pronto falta o se queda fijo o cambia de forma.

Ansié la dispersión de las duras constelaciones, esa sucia propaganda luminosa del Trust Divino Relojero. (67: 426-27)

The ludic mode of this passage should deceive no one into thinking that it is mere whimsy. Its philosophical point is as definite as that of any passage of Morelli or any essay by Cortázar. Here the “sphere of finite determinations” is an object of visceral disgust. The daily rising of the sun is monstrous because “**Es inhumano**” — the link between humanity and the cosmos has been broken, like that between the individual and society under modern conditions. The predictability of the sunrise is not a neutral fact, much less a sign of a benevolently ordered universe, but rather an “indiferencia mecánica” analogous to that of a modern bureaucracy. Newton’s divine watchmaker, once a liberating image of rational comprehensibility, has become the “Trust Divino Relojero,” an impersonal institution with a name from a foreign empire. The historical process behind this kind of thinking is described by Martin Buber thusly for ancient India and Rome: “When a culture is no longer centered in a living and continually renewed relational process,... common causality... grows into an oppressive and crushing doom.... Where the meaningful law of a heaven used to arch,... we feel... the compulsion of... a stranger to spirit who bends every neck with the entire burden of the dead mass of the world” (103-04).²

But what is the alternative to this mechanical indifference? To Horacio, it appears that if indifference is to be replaced with will, fate with freedom, it must be solely **his** solipsistic individual will and **his** unconditioned individual freedom. He projects his somnolent “vómito de mí mismo” upon the universe and turns it into “una operación dialéctica” in which “common causality... grows into an oppressive and crushing doom.” To Horacio, the only alternative to an impersonal order is not a personal order — that of a God beyond the cosmos or of a humanity in harmony with one another and with the cosmos “in a living and continually renewed relational process” — but rather an utter nihilistic unpredictability.³ Thus the possibility that replaces necessity is not infinite possibility but indefinite possibility — not choice but chance.

“No se puede denunciar nada,” Etienne quotes Morelli, “si se lo hace dentro del sistema al que pertenece lo denunciado” (99:509). But this is precisely what Horacio does. His anti-rationalism is simply an inverted Cartesian rationalism. He is trapped in modern Western rationalist and individualist assumptions at the same time that he denounces them. In the very manner of his denial, he endorses what he is fighting against — endorses, that is, inscribes himself on its reverse. In Morelli’s words, he not only has half his body stuck in the mold, but he does nothing to extricate himself except to slap himself and others in the face all day long (74:442). As Brody says, “he proceeds

in a dualistic, either-or manner" (24), so that his quest for freedom and his quest for wholeness contradict each other. He strives ceaselessly to become, and therefore, according to his own self-imposed dichotomies, he cannot be. He wants the kibbutz of desire, but he keeps ending up in the ghetto of impulse.

Thus Horacio has picked up the sword of the spirit by the blade. In him, the spiritual carapace of modern Western humanity has cracked open — but, as so often, it has done so on the wrong side: downward, not upward; toward chance, not choice. The flexible universe⁴ for which he longs is that of madness.

Hence, it seems to me, the intellectual confusion of this highly intellectualized person parallels and contributes to his confusions and failures in personal life and to the ultimate failure of his personal **and** intellectual quests. This interpretation complements other approaches to Horacio's personal failures and descent into madness. His main problem with other persons — his inability to commit himself genuinely to anyone and anything outside himself — is certainly not reducible to philosophic terms. But it is, I think, analogous to and mutually supportive of the false intellectual positions which he espouses or, in Morelli, endorses. Childs, in her seminal study of Horacio's interpersonal failures as seen from an existentialist viewpoint, locates the core of his problem as being precisely that his approach is negative, that he knows much better what is running **from** than **toward**: he acts, she says, "more through a curiosity in the bizarre [the sub-rational] than through a hope of finding a source [the supra-rational] which might produce meaning in his life" (172). Hence "his search... continually loses direction as it is converted into an escape rather than a search" (171). This is true of Horacio on all levels of thought and behavior.

This fact is most clearly seen in his relations with the Other as embodied in La Maga, his and the book's "significant other." Horacio regards her as an embodiment of his non-rational ideal — or at least he does so in those moods in which most commentators have preferred to quote him. In these moods "reason," or hyperintellectuality, and its non-rational opposite are often represented in a metaphor of sight and blindness. It is "the nobility of sight," as Hans Jonas has said, which creates both the distinction between space and time and that between self and world (*Phenomenon*, 135-56). And it is these distinctions which Horacio is constantly trying to overcome, and which he sees overcome (or undercome) in La Maga, whose real name is Lucía, patroness of the blind. "Feliz de ella," he says, "que podía creer sin ver, que formaba cuerpo con la duración, el continuo de la vida" (3:35). And elsewhere she assures him: "[T]e haría bien quedarte un poco ciego" (20:106).

But La Maga, I think, is a far more ambiguous figure than she has generally been taken to be. Barrenechea has traced in Cortázar's working notes the complex development of La Maga from fiction to fact to fantasy (33-34), and in her final incarnation (or disincarnation) she emerges as a figure of more ironies and paradoxes than have generally been noted. Horacio speaks of her as "convencida de mi soberana autarquía" (2:27). We know that this is an

illusion on her part. Is his view of her an equal and reciprocal illusion? The clearest indication that this is indeed so lies in her treatment of her baby son, Rocamadour. She lavishes affection on him but also neglects his real needs — not only his physical needs (he is constantly ill) but his emotional ones as well. She ignores his cries, interacting with him only when **she feels like it**. Rocamadour is her most significant Other, her own natural completeness, and she destroys this completeness by neglecting its own inner needs and using it superficially as a mirror for her own self-love: “Rocamadour, ya sé que es como un espejo. Estás durmiendo o mirándote los pies. Yo aquí sostengo un espejo y creo que sos vos” (32:220).

Thus Rocamadour dies one night, after La Maga has been repeatedly advised to put him in the hospital. It is the behavior of the male (hyper)intellectuals in this scene which has generally been criticized; but it is La Maga, the idealized non-intellectual, who has after all caused the death by her inability to give to Rocamadour as one person to another. She is, in fact, unaware that Rocamadour has a real life to lose — and when Horacio discovers the baby’s death and tells everyone in the room but her, his cruel joke is, among other things, an attempt to make this point. When she discovers the death for herself and becomes wildly distraught, the others calm her down and put a compress over her eyes. “‘Si es del agua colonia la van a dejar ciega’, se dijo Oliveira” (28:203). But he keeps silence and lets them do it, himself shocked into uncaring numbness, letting her run the risk of the blindness she has wished in him. In this implicit criticism by Horacio of his anti-rational ideal in La Maga, Cortázar reveals part of a figure which works ironically against his own tendency toward a one-sided anti-rationalism.

Thus Horacio’s projection of his own anti-rational ideal upon La Maga is shaken by reality. Nevertheless, his propensity for making such projections — both in his intellectual life and in his personal life — continues unabated and indeed soon sinks to a new level. When La Maga disappears, Horacio becomes obsessed with finding her, much as he once became obsessed with finding a sugar cube he had dropped (1:22). Whatever he loses becomes the center of his life, for it becomes a symbol for his own lost center. The sacred Void which he seeks in the “kibbutz del deseo” (36:253), and whose presence he perceives in La Maga’s “blindness,” bears an ironic relation to his own inner void, the “vacío” from which his lovers flee (90:477).

Thus it is not surprising that he soon begins to imagine another woman as La Maga. “Maga” is after all not a name but a title — a name for what he has projected onto her. Having lost one Maga, he adopts another. But this time he must have not only a Maga, but the Maga whom he has lost. He begins projecting La Maga onto other women (“Un deseo incontrolable la había... proyectado” [48:337]) while he is still on the boat to Argentina. Then, when he gets there, he begins projecting her onto his friend Traveler’s wife Talita. When he first meets her, he greets her conventionally, “casi sin mirarla” (38:263) —

and in fact he never does really look at her. In what Childs calls "his independence, or rather his self-dependence" (166), he has reached at this point such a state of alienation and self-withdrawal that he cannot deal with the world at all except through projections. As with La Maga he projected his needs onto her, so now he goes one step further and projects her image — "la imagen de una posible reunión" (48:340) — onto another, not only in her function but in her very personhood, which he has solipsistically reduced to a function of himself.

Thus he slips from neurosis into psychosis, culminating in his and the book's unending. At first he realizes that his projection of La Maga onto Talita is "un falso parecido total" (48:337), but then his fantasy takes over, until finally he kisses Talita in the underworld of the madhouse morgue. Momentarily Talita is tempted to collude with him, to enter into his world; but in trying to explain it all to Traveler in terms he can understand, she reenters his discourse and stays above the waters in which Horacio is drowning (55:378).⁵ For a time, in chapter 56, Horacio seems to be realizing again that Talita is not La Maga. But as Talita and Traveler show more sympathy with his plight, he misinterprets this as agreement with his delusion. I defer a close examination of this chapter; suffice it to say at this point that the ending of the "short" book is ambiguous, and the additional chapters compound the ambiguity. And with the publication of Cortázar's working notes, we know for certain what we had inferred as probable, that this ambiguity is deliberately built into the book (*Cuaderno* 247 [125]).⁶ It is not clear whether Horacio kills himself, survives, becomes permanently insane, dreams the whole thing, or what. Perhaps he falls right through the hopscotch diagram in the courtyard into the "universo plástico" of his half-awake desires. He has finally tried to bridge the gap between his solipsistic projections and the cosmos outside; but he has allowed the gap to grow too wide, and he falls into it. And the image of **falling** into a square marked "Heaven" is itself, among other things, both an ironic reminder of how he has mistaken the lower bound of language for the upper bound and a recognition of the deadly consequences of doing so.

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At this point many of my readers may be rising in revolt. Have I not produced a reading of *Rayuela* which is not only negative but procrustean — and in particular, have I not repeatedly contradicted Cortázar himself, whose frequently expressed views are essentially identical with those of Horacio and Morelli? To this I answer: First, my view of *Rayuela* is far from negative; indeed, I consider it one of the greatest works of fiction in living memory. Second, I do not think I have been more procrustean than anyone has to be in order to write a mere essay about a universe like *Rayuela*. And finally, I do not think I have contradicted Cortázar more often than he contradicts himself in the voices of the multiple agonists of this *disculibro* (*Cuaderno* 201 [79]). Cortázar,

like his greatest work, was large, he contained multitudes. Nor am I unaware that what I have been calling confusions and contradictions may simply be the form taken by the paradoxes, ambiguities and mysteries of existence when they reach the surface of our minds to be inscribed. "Beware of the surface of things," says Daumal (71). Thus at this point I need to "romper la dura costra mental" (133:585) — to break through the crust of my own procrusteanism and explain why I think Cortázar magnificently succeeds, precisely while Horacio fails miserably.

Rayuela is a book deliberately **desescrito**, a work with many loose threads left deliberately dangling from it. This image of threads was central to the book's genesis (cf. *Cuaderno* 163-64 [39-401]). And central to the understanding of that image is Cortázar's idea of **figura** versus **imagen**. The **figura** formed by *Rayuela* is even more complex than the vast cat's cradle which Horacio makes of his room in chapter 56; and I certainly have no intention of crashing through this **figura** and sending basins flying in all directions. Or rather, having perhaps done something close to that in the first part of this essay, I have no intention of leaving it at that. Rather, it is now time to sit down and dialogue with the arranger of the threads like a true **lector-cómplice**.

For the key to beginning to understand the work is, I think, not only the word **figura**, but the word **dialogue**. The **figura** of *Rayuela* is constituted by a vast multi-voiced dialogic structure — a polyphonic dialogue not only between characters but within them, in which characters **all** of whom stand in some way for the author contradict and criticize not only one another but themselves. "Digamos," says Morelli, "que el mundo es una figura, hay que leerla. Por leerla entendamos generarla" (71:435). *Rayuela* reflects this vision of the world, "un complejo cuya unidad está en no tenerla" (83:460). Its methods are stated by Morelli: "la ironía, la autocrítica incesante, la incongruencia, la imaginación al servicio de nadie" (79:452). Or again, as Horacio describes a plan of Morelli:

El libro debía ser como esos dibujos que proponen los psicólogos del Gestalt, y así ciertas líneas inducirían al observador a trazar imaginativamente las que cerraban la figura. Pero a veces las líneas ausentes eran las más importantes, las únicas que realmente contaban. (109:533)

The dialogic **figura** of *Rayuela* is made up of many threads of discourse, some of which I have followed at the inevitable cost of ignoring or even cutting across others. But I believe I have been following some of the most important ones, not all of which are there for the **lector-hembra** (nor, at all times, the **lector-cómplice**) to see. At any rate, having constituted my own discourse by these images, I think that I can explain best what I mean by returning to the chapter in which these images most obviously occur, namely chapter 56, in which the discourse of Horacio's final madness encounters his dialogue with Traveler.

Traveler's name, Manuel, is of course a form of Immanuel, "God with us" — a statement of the place of the Other in individual life.⁷ But Horacio calls him by Talita's pet name for him, Manú, which is also the name of the "Hindu Noah," the ancestor of humanity after the Flood and the eponymous author of the first Indian law code (the name is related to **man** and **mind**). And indeed, Traveler survives the flow of chaos and deals successfully with the human, law-observing world. But his "humaneness" is the result of a reconciliation with "reality," a fallenness, which Horacio cannot accept. Instead, Horacio must cast himself as the sage, who is not humane, and who treats humanity like straw dogs. And yet I think that Traveler does in some sense unite the temporal and the eternal; but Horacio can see only the temporal side. He misses the eternal because it is not expressed in terms of his own either-or, self-defeating exclusivism, by which all his quests become escapes, so that he can only become and never be.

That Traveler is a close double to Horacio was of course evident to readers long before we had before us the process by which this motif was worked out in the *cuaderno de bitácora*. The latter, however, offers some interesting insights into the nature of this doubling. A key passage reads:

Traveler y Oliveira, ¿son el mismo? El hombre y su doppelgänger. Oliveira es el conocimiento, pero Traveler vive. Cada uno desea lo que es propio del otro. **Talita es ese símbolo.**

Identificación progresiva de Talita y la Maga. Oliveira cree que puede resucitar a la Maga, que murió en París. Fracasarà, of course. (223 [101])

Squeezed into a corner of the note as an afterthought, but by that very fact a significant one, is the phrase: "Fábula de Ho y Mo en Daumal, 'M. Analogue', p. 128." In this episode of René Daumal's spiritual allegory, two brothers, Mo and Ho, fuse into one, Moho, who is able through his combined knowledge and skill to attain the Bitter-Rose of great knowledge (Daumal 69-73). Daumal always calls them Mo and Ho, but Cortázar's "Ho y Mo" suggests that he noticed what Daumal, an author as ludic as Cortázar himself, playfully veiled: **homo**, a single complete man.

Horacio, like Mo, has been captured by the Hollow-Men who exist only as negative forms, who "eat only the void" and "get drunk on empty words and all the meaningless expressions we utter" (Daumal 69).⁸ And Traveler, like Ho, must in a sense kill his brother in order to restore him to true life (cf. Daumal 72) — a fact which Horacio senses and takes too literally. Traveler must, at any rate, try to penetrate Horacio's head, "romper la dura costra mental" (133: 585), "not fear[ing] to kill a dead man" (Daumal 72).

Traveler, then, breaks through the involved mesh of Horacio's solipsistic discourse and sits down to dialogue with him, to invite him to a quest which will not be simply an escape. But if he does not accept Horacio's view of things, neither does he dismiss his behavior as invalid. He does not move on Horacio

to restrain him, as well he might. Rather, he sits and continues to confront him in dialogue, as with an essentially genuine person who has gotten trapped in this situation. He urges him to be reasonable, while Horacio keeps assuring him that things are perfectly reasonable from the side where he sits. And neither seems obviously correct in any total sense. Each seems correct in turn, for what Cortázar has created here is an interplay of two discourses each of which englobes the other one. Thus, for example, Horacio keeps calling Travelers his "**doppelgänger**" until the latter finally retorts, "**El verdadero doppelgänger sos vos**" (56:394). Each is here trying to state the totalness of his own discourse and the partialness of the other's. Thus the reader sympathizes with each in turn — and, eventually, with both at the same time, acquiring a binocular vision of the **figura**, a vision which neither of the characters can himself attain.

Eventually Traveler manages to extract from Horacio the admission that he knows Talita is not La Maga. But he also tries to quiet the people hammering on the door, and when he leaves, he denies them entrance. He insists to them that Horacio does not need to be manhandled, and finally he cautions Horacio to lock the door after him. In this act of love and trust on Traveler's part, Horacio finally sees the connection between Traveler's world and his own; he finally catches a glimpse of the dialogic **figura** which the two of them have unwittingly constructed. "Andá a saber," he muses, "si no me habrá quedado al borde" (56:403); for he is on the verge of seeing that he is already **in** that world of authenticity if he will recognize his potentiality as a potentiality — if he will let himself be, rather than perpetually become.

Thus dialogic contact is made between Horacio and Traveler, between possibility and actuality. This contact is strengthened when the madhouse personnel try to lure Horacio down and Talita rebuffs them:

— No sea idiota — dijo Talita, y en el silencio extraordinario que siguió a su admonición, el encuentro de las miradas de Talita y Oliveira fue como si dos pájaros chocaran en pleno vuelo y cayeran enredados en la casilla nueve, o por lo menos así lo disfrutaron los interesados. (56:403)

In the model of the cosmos on which the hopscotch game is based, square nine is the **primum mobile**, the invisible sphere which causes the motion of all the lower ones, the intermediary between the spiritual and material worlds.⁹ And in this intermediate sphere Horacio and the Travelers find common ground, if only for a moment of non-discursive "silencio extraordinario" where knowledge is transcended by love (cf. Sola 126). "Al fin y al cabo algún encuentro había" (56:404); contact has finally been made in that encounter which is real life (cf. Buber 62).

Contact but, alas, not connection. The Center has not been reached, "the highest part of the perceptible world" (Quispel 220) has not been pierced. Horacio retains his isolated will and remains within the webs of his self-referential discourse. In spite of Traveler's pleas, he has never promised not to

jump out the window. And in addition, his admission that Talita is not La Maga turns out not to have been meant in Traveler's sense — that is, in a sense in which she cannot also be La Maga. Secretly englobing Traveler's discourse in this way, Horacio starts calling Talita "La Maga" again and contemplates leaning further out the window until he would fall out onto the hopscotch board and kill himself. And as he has said: "Fijate que si me tiro... voy a caer justo en el Cielo" (56:398).

But does he? The ending is inconclusive in the short version of the book, and in the long version it is of course downright bewildering. The calculated ambiguity is evident enough even without the logbook's revelation that this ending was deliberately made as ambiguous as possible in a quite late stage of the book's composition (*Cuaderno* 243-49 [121-27]). We can certainly be glad that Cortázar rejected an ending in which the Travelers give up on Horacio's sanity and take charge of him as a patient, "todo vuelve-al-orden," and Talita starts scrubbing the *rayuela* off the pavement (245 [123]). But neither did Cortázar think that Horacio jumped. In the logbook he literally rejects this possibility by marking it out and adding: "No es de los que se tiran" (243 [121]). Nevertheless he was aware of the dominance of this option in the symbolic resonances of the ending:

Rayuela... prueba cómo mucho de esa búsqueda puede terminar en fracaso, en la medida en que no se puede dejar así no más de ser occidental, con toda la tradición judeo-cristiana que hemos heredado y que nos ha hecho lo que somos. (Harss 269)

En cuanto a ese equilibrio último que se simboliza un poco con el final de Oliveira, ese final en que realmente no se sabe lo que ha sucedido — yo mismo no lo sé... —, yo creo que fue una tentativa de demostrar desde un punto de vista occidental, con todas sus limitaciones y las imposibilidades conexas, un salto en lo absoluto como el que da el monje Zen o el maestro del Vedanta. (Harss 285-6)

Cortázar's statements reflect some of his typical attitudes of the same kinds as those I have criticized in Horacio and Morelli. But if Cortázar himself honestly did not know the outcome of the book's ending, I think it is also permissible not to take at face value his formulation of its meaning — especially when he himself prefaces his interpretation with the words "yo creo," and speaks both of "fracaso" and of "equilibrio último." *Rayuela* is a great novel and not simply a one-dimensional roman à thèse because its characters and situations take on that independent life so evident both in the book itself and its pre-texts. As Morelli says, "No hay mensaje, hay mensajeros y eso es el mensaje" (79:453). The messengers, including the author, constitute a message, even as they contradict one another and themselves, because their conflicting threads of discourse in this *disculibro* form a vast polyphonic figure of dialogue

which transcends both the conscious intentions of the author and the conscious apprehensions of the reader — not least of the **lector-cómplice**, the reader who enters into the dialogue as a participant.

And among the participants in this dialogue is Cortázar himself. “Extraña autocreación del autor por su obra” (79:543), muses Morelli; and elsewhere, “Escribir es dibujar mi mandala y a la vez recorrerlo” (82:458). Usually it seems as if Cortázar himself, as Horacio says of Morelli, “no ve más que el lado negativo de su guerra” (99:504). But as Horacio and Morelli’s creator said, “He intentado esa sumersión en lo negativo como posible terreno de reconciliación y de encuentro con nosotros mismos” (Schneider 24). And in this he succeeds. In the logbook he says of Horacio, “Empiezo a verlo — a verme” (196 [74]). By creating a critical distance between Horacio and himself, he creates a critical distance between himself and himself, a distance which becomes a space for dialogue; and in this self-dialogue, he creates himself and assists us in our own self-creation as we begin to see ourselves.¹⁰ In this way, as Brody says, Cortázar “achieves the authenticity unsuccessfully sought by Oliveira and only postulated by Morelli” (85).

Thus no self-respecting **lector-cómplice** would want *Rayuela* to be more lucid and less ludic. The book’s late-chosen title takes on another level of meaning when we realize how we have been led to hop from one discursive position to another on this heteroglossic field of paradoxes without ever coming to rest — indeed, while affirming the validity of all the squares in a larger pattern which we cannot fully grasp. We re-vision Cortázar as he re-visions himself, and both of us end up as much up in the air as Horacio, our confusions unresolved but our potentialities still alive.

NOTES

1 References to *Rayuela* are to chapter and page number.

2 Hans Jonas has also explored the case of the late-classical civilization in a strikingly relevant passage: “We can imagine with what feelings gnostic men must have looked up at the sky. How evil its brilliance must have looked to them, how alarming its vastness and the rigid immobility of its courses, how cruel its muteness! The music of the spheres was no longer heard, and the admiration for the perfect spherical form gave place to the terror of so much perfection directed at the enslavement of man. The pious wonderment with which earlier men had looked up at the higher regions of the universe became a feeling of oppression at the iron vault which keeps man exiled from his home beyond” (*Gnostic Religion* 261).

3 His wish for “la dispersión de las duras constelaciones” is an equal and opposite error to that of the Neoclassical bourgeois rationalists who wished that the stars were equally spaced across the sky.

4 Note the ironic mutual mirroring of Horacio's ideal "universo plástico" and Morelli's "reino de material plástico."

5 Boldy's contention that La Maga "possesses" Talita in some sense outside Horacio's mind (84-86) seems to me strained. Certainly, as Boldy points out, the relation of these characters embodies the same "possession" motif as many of Cortázar's earlier short stories. However, in *Rayuela* the relation between fantasy and reality becomes fundamentally different (cf. Barrenechea 37-46).

6 References to the *Cuaderno de bitácora* give first the page number of the Barrenechea edition and then that of the *cuaderno* itself.

7 Note the ironic doubling of Manuel Traveler with the bag lady Emmanuèle of chapter 36.

8 This connection is strengthened by the parallels made in chapters 129 and 133 between Horacio and the real Uruguayan eccentric Ceferino Piriz, whose crackpot world-government scheme is that of a man totally trapped in the web of his own words. Cf. especially Talita's statement "Me confundió con la Maga. ... Todo lo demás tenía que seguir como si lo enumerara Ceferino, una cosa detrás de la otra" (133:589). Brody's interpretation of Piriz as an over—"rational" **opposite** to Horacio (23) seems to me to contradict the sense of these chapters at many points (cf. also *Cuaderno* 233 [111]). Both Piriz and Horacio, may, I think, be taken as illustrations of Chesterton's aphorism that a madman is not one who has lost his reason but one who has lost everything **but** his reason.

9 To the Gnostic sectary Basilides, this sphere was the **methorion pneuma** or Intermediate Spirit; "it is the firmament... between the visible world and the transcendent world and is situated beyond the sky," and was identified with the Holy Spirit of Christianity (Quispel 218-19) — i.e. Dante's "Love that moves the sun and the other stars" (cf. the bird imagery of the passage).

10 In the logbook appears this possible epigraph from Arthur Conan Doyle: "... for nothing clears up a case so much as stating it to another person" (199 [77]). Cf. also Varela 131: "Oliveira... es un personaje que se busca a sí mismo, y nos obliga a buscarlo, de principio a fin del libro. Se busca dentro y fuera de él, en todos los aspectos posibles de la realidad, a través de todos los seres que encuentra (¿por qué no a través del lector?)."

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